
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District: **Walter Reed Army Medical Center Historic District** (x) Agenda
Address: **6900 Georgia Avenue NW**

Meeting Date: **March 25, 2021** (x) New construction
Case Number: **21-131** (x) Revised concept

The applicant, Urban Atlantic, agent for ground lessee TPWR Developer LLC, requests the Board's review of a concept application to construct a five-story, 300,000-square-foot, mixed-use building with residential over street-fronting retail, over a parking garage. The project necessitates the razing of two buildings, one noncontributing and the other the former guardhouse (Building 38) previously approved for demolition by the Mayor's Agent.

The building would mainly face Georgia Avenue, but would also have frontage on Dahlia and 12th streets. It would back up to the historic four-story Building 7 and the noncontributing Building 6. The underground parking would be accessed from a rear driveway off 12th Street, and the loading dock from a driveway near the Georgia Avenue entrance to Main Drive, between a children's playground and historic Building 12.

The proposed building is referred to as "QRS," because the small-area plan and master plan for the campus depicted three separate placeholder buildings in this location. Q, R, and S have here been applied to sections of the new construction. At one and a half blocks, the proposed building is quite long, but the approach to modulating its length is fairly successful. With the use of hyphens and changes in materials, the single building is expressed as three, with minor and major recesses breaking up the mass.

Previous review

The Board first reviewed the project in January and expressed general support for the concept's overall size and footprint, general massing and materials, but it did not vote approval. It instead requested that the project return with revisions, with the applicant to consider:

1. whether the length of the building can be mitigated by either dividing it into more than one structure or creating more pronounced recesses;
2. redesigning the storefronts with more consistency within each section of building and to relate better to the openings above;
3. revising the attic story with more depth and detail, but without a five-foot setback on one section;
4. adding more detail to the brick walls; and
5. redesigning the balconies and door openings so that the latter relate better to the rest of the fenestration.

(See page c of the drawing set for additional Board and staff comments.)

Response to the Board's recommendations

The building has not been broken up into more than one, but there is a bit more separation in that the top story has been set far back at the hyphens (which have also been simplified and slightly narrowed).

The storefronts have been revised to be more similar within each distinct section of the building, which is especially appropriate because most of the ground-floor spaces will not be stores. They also now better relate to the openings above.

The top stories have been further detailed, and terminate in parapets.

There is some additional brick detail with the replacement of the attic fiber-cement panels with brick panels on "Building Q" and an extra corbel at the top of the fourth floor of "R." The contrasting brick at the top of the first floor has been carried across the project.

The openings at the balconies are the same size as previously, but the doors would have muntins similar to those of the windows.

Other revisions

Without cataloging every other revision, the others are discussed below.

There is slight variation in heights, punctuated by the setbacks of the tops of the hyphens. The drawings now depict three stair penthouses. The rear of the building and the landscaping has been developed further. There are more regular and legible entrances. The fenestration is more varied between buildings.

Some of the balconies have been eliminated from "Building S," the south end of the project, and more of the balconies are recessed (pp. 23-24).

The massing of the northern end of the building has changed, eliminating the shallow and asymmetrical pavilions in favor of setting back the northwest corner of the building from Dahlia Street and centering a better-scaled main residential entrance in the primary mass (p. 3-4). There is a schematic of proposed landscaping (p. 4). The west elevation of "Building Q" has been simplified, with the fiber-cement panels eliminated.

Evaluation

The revisions are improvements and generally responsive to the Board's direction.

Less variation of the lintels in "Building S" is recommended. There's little advantage in switching from brick to a light precast. And the double soldier course at the fourth floor will likely make the now-squatter windows look still more squat. The double-ganged windows would look better with a mullion between the frames.

It is still recommended that the sliding doors be reconsidered. The Board has not approved facades characterized by sliding doors opening onto balconies. The openings are large, the doors in different planes.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept and delegate further review to staff, on the condition that the issues raised in the evaluation above are sufficiently addressed.